Family Activity: Create a Chimera!
Provided by the Art Institute of Chicago Department of Museum Education

Materials

- paper
- pencils, colored pencils, and/or crayons
- clay or homemade dough
- plastic silverware, toothpicks, and other materials for sculpting the clay
- acrylic, poster, or temper paints
- paintbrushes

Introduction

A chimera is an imaginary creature whose body is made up of parts of real and imaginary animals. This chimera was created using the features of several different animals. For example, the face combines a wolf’s snout and ears with the wings of a bird.

This chimera was made about 2,000 years ago to be put in a tomb. Figures such as this one were meant to provide companionship and protection for people who had died. This sculpture’s catlike hind legs are poised to spring into action to protect the deceased, and the arched body has wings on each side to fly between this world and the next.

Discussion Questions

- Look closely at the chimera. What other animal features can you find? From what kind of animals?
- This chimera is painted with many different patterns, or repeating shapes. How many patterns can you find?
- What types of animals would you want for protection and what types would you want for friendship. Why?
Activity: Create Your Own Chimera!

Steps

1) **Brainstorm!**
   - Make a list of the animals that you want to protect you and the animals that you want to be your friend.
   - Select several animals from each category and choose one feature to represent each animal. For example, long, floppy ears could represent a fluffy rabbit, and a pattern of black-and-orange stripes could stand for a ferocious tiger.
   - Combine the animal features from your list in a drawing of an imaginary animal.

2) **Create!**
   - After finishing your drawing, use your hands to sculpt clay into the chimera that you drew. You may want to sculpt each body part separately and then attach all the parts together, or you can create your entire animal from one piece of clay. Tools such as toothpicks or plastic silverware can be pressed into the clay to create details and patterns.
   - Dry or bake your chimera according to the directions of the clay you used. Once your completed chimera is dry, paint it to further enhance the animal qualities.

3) **Share!**
   - Show your chimera to friends and family and see if they can guess what animals inspired your imaginary animal creation.
   - Keep your chimera in a place where it can keep you safe and keep you company!